Addressing the Cultural Knowledge Gap

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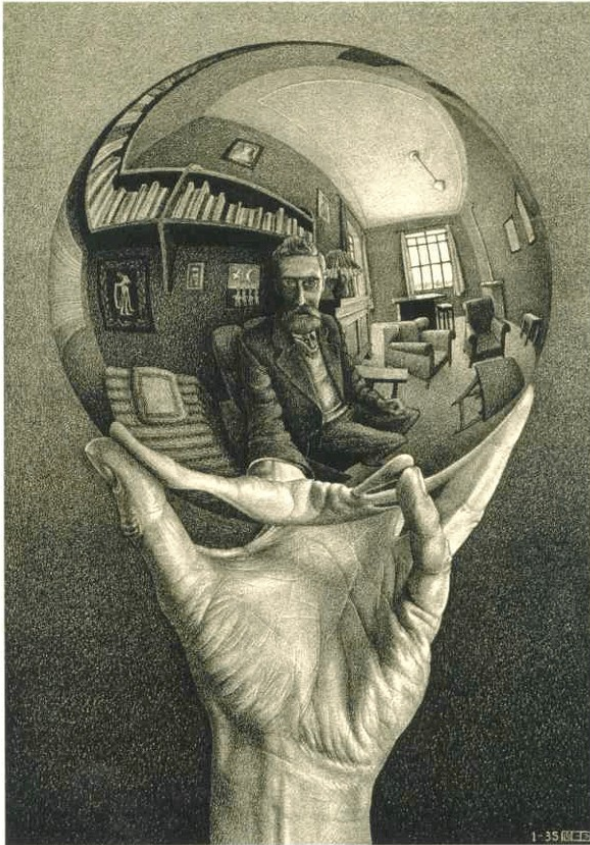
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Agenda

- Assumptions
- Future operational environment
- Information needs
- The cultural knowledge gap
- Conclusion

Future Operational Environment

- Small wars and "small scale contingencies"
- Operational environments disconnected from the global economy
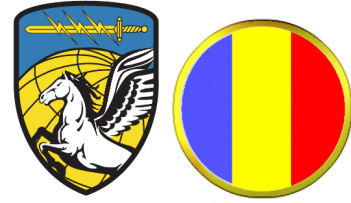- Non-territorial organizing principle

# Future Operational Environment

Information Needs

- 1942: *The Conference with the Social Anthropologists and Resulting Operations* (memo)
- 1965: *Research in the Department of Defense on Internal Conflict and Insurgency in Developing Countries* (report)
- Defense Department Directive 3000.05, *Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations* (directive)
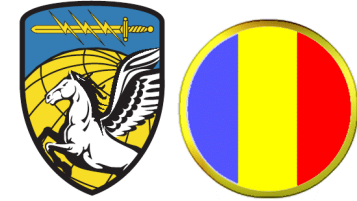
Information Needs

- Office of Naval Research Study for MCWL (2003-2004)
- Cultural Preparation of the Environment (CPE) (2004-2005)
- Counterinsurgency FM 3-24 (2005 - 2006)
- OSD(P&R) study (2005 - 2007)
- Human Terrain System (2006 - present)

Findings

Social structure

- Organization of social groups (tribe, class, ethic, sectarian, etc.) within the area of operations

- Relative social status of power holders and social subgroups

- Historic and current power holders within the society, and within social subgroups

- Relationships between subgroups, such as tribes and ethnic groups

- Geographic locations of individual and corporate power holders

- Leadership style and organizational predispositions of social subgroups

- Territorial claims of subgroups within the society, such as tribes

Findings

Culture

- Concepts of honor, shame, and revenge

- Religious beliefs

- Customary norms of behavior, especially those that confer and destroy honor

- Relationship between customary norms and values (e.g., modesty is related to honor)

- Concepts of purity and pollution among the local population

- Source of identity (collective or individual)

- Social importance of private space

- Gender norms concerning various types of work; social status of various types of work

- Concept of family

- Means by which trust is developed between individuals and groups within the local society

Findings

Cultural Forms

- Culturally defined conflict resolution mechanisms, including rituals

- Specific gestures and symbols, particularly those with meaning to insurgent groups.

- Non-verbal communication patterns, including gestures, in the local area of operations

- Interpretations of history by various groups

The Cultural Knowledge Gap

Combatant Command Knowledge Area Deficiencies
(Self Assessment)

	PEACETIME	S&R OPERATIONS
EUCOM	🔴	🔴
PACOM	🟡	🟡
CENTCOM	🔴	🔴
SOUTHCOM	⚫	⚫

🔴 Inadequate   ⚫ Generally Adequate

🟡 Generally Inadequate

- Societal/cultural/tribal
- Economy
- Infrastructure
- Evolving threats
- Language
- Not enough experts (spotty and thin)

The Cultural Knowledge Gap
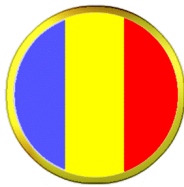
- Government funding for social sciences
  - ✓ Deputy Undersecretary of Defense (Science & Technology) Human, Social, and Cultural Behavior (HSCB) Modeling Initiative
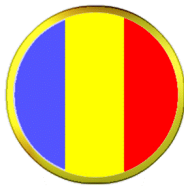
The Cultural Knowledge Gap

- Investments in modeling not basic socio-cultural research

The Cultural Knowledge Gap

- Other agencies not focused on this issue.
  - ✓ Intelligence Community Socio-Cultural Dynamics Working Group

The Cultural Knowledge Gap

- No coordination of research
  - ✓ USD(Stab Ops) Social Science Research & Analysis Council

The Cultural Knowledge Gap
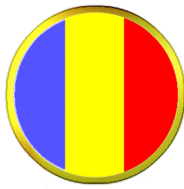
- Inadequate training
  - ✓ TRADOC Culture Center
  - ✓ USMC Center for Advanced Operational Cultural Knowledge
  - ✓ Air Force Culture and Language Center
  - ✓ JFK School
  - ✓ Joint Special Operations University
  - ✓ Combat Training Centers
  - ✓ Foreign Service Institute

The Cultural Knowledge Gap

- Support to the operational warfighter
  - ✓ Human Terrain System
  - ✓ SOSI's Iraq Advisor Task Force
  - ✓ PRTs/EPRTs
  - ✓ Civil Affairs

HTS Origins

The Operational Gap (10th Mtn Div/CJTF76 JUONS/1CD/82 Abn/II MEF ONS):

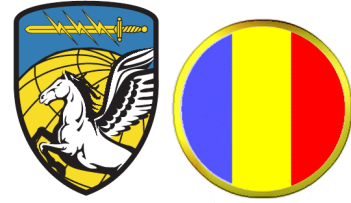- Insufficient understanding of the target area culture and its impact on operational decisions; and insufficient or ineffective transfer of knowledge to follow-on units via RIP/TOA process.

- Limited Joint, Service, or Interagency capability (organization, methods, and tools) to conduct research, visualize, understand, and ~~explo~~ human terrain (i.e. population in which the unit opera~~tes~~

QDR/IWRM Task 2.5.6

Symptoms:

- Limited ability to conduct research, archive, transfer data and information about human terrain gained during operations.
- Limited socio-cultural knowledge bases.
- Inability to exploit open source and unclass cultural information.
- Insufficient doctrine/TTPs for "denied area ethnography."
- Limited SME support to assist commanders to understand human terrain.
- Inability to tap into the worldwide cultural knowledge capital.

HTS Objectives

- Provide BCT/RCT commanders with relevant, socio-cultural information and knowledge, and the dedicated expertise to integrate that understanding into their military decision-making process

- Minimize loss in continuity between unit Relief in Place/Transfer of Authority

- Research, interpret, archive and provide cultural information and knowledge to enhance operational effectiveness

- Enable the US military to work in partnership with the local population to achieve common goals of physical security, economic development, and political stability.

HTS Components
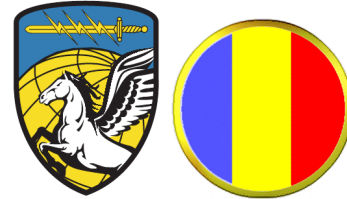
1. Human Terrain Teams (HTT)/Human Terrain Analysis Teams (HTAT)
Deployed as required to BCT/RCT and Division

2. Reach-back Research Cells (RRC)
RC/Civilian Analysts, CONUS-based, regionally-focused

3. Subject Matter Expert-Networks (SME-Nets)
On-call, micro-regional focused

4. Toolkit
"Map-HT Toolkit", fully DCGS compliant
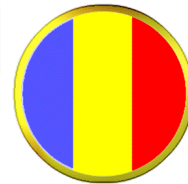
5. Social Science Research & Analysis
Operationally relevant, empirical, qualitative and quantitative social science research conducted in the AOR.

6. Assessment
A team composed of HTS staff and others with no knowledge of the program who are tasked with examining operational

HTS Projected Fielding

| Pri	REQUIREMENT	OCT07	NOV07	DEC07	JAN08	FEB08	MAR08	APR08	MAY08	JUN08	JUL08	AUG08	SEP08
							FY08						
1	**HTT AF1**	DEPLOYED											
2	HTT IZ1	DEPLOYED											
3	HTT IZ2	DEPLOYED											
4	HTT IZ3	DEPLOYED											
5	HTT IZ4	DEPLOYED											
6	HTT IZ5	DEPLOYED											
7	HTT IZ6	TRAINING				DEPLOYED							
8	HTT IZ7	HIRING	TRAINING					DEPLOYS 12 APR TO CRC					
9	HTT IZ8			HIRING	TRAINING					DEPLOYS			
10	**HTT AF2**			HIRING	TRAINING					DEPLOYS			
11	HTT IZ9					HIRING	TRAINING				DEPLOYS		
12	HTT IZ10					HIRING	TRAINING				DEPLOYS		
13	HTT IZ11					HIRING	TRAINING				DEPLOYS		
14	HTRAC - CORPS					HIRING	TRAINING				DEPLOYS		
15	**HTT AF3**	HIRING	TRAINING					DEPLOYS 12 APR TO CRC					
16	**HTAT AF1**					HIRING	TRAINING				DEPLOYS		
17	HTT IZ12						HIRING	TRAINING					DEPLOYS LATE AUG
18	HTT IZ13						HIRING	TRAINING					EARLY SEP
19	HTT IZ14						HIRING	TRAINING					EARLY SEP
20	HTAT IZ 1						HIRING	TRAINING					EARLY SEP
21	HTAT IZ 2							HIRING					LATE SEP
22	HTAT IZ 3							HIRING					LATE SEP
23	HTAT IZ 4							HIRING					LATE SEP

Current sustainment process is that no HTT or HTAT is replaced in total; in order to mitigate loss of continuity RIP/TOA, individual team member replacements are hired, trained, and deployed to teams in theater over time.

- **HTS is currently using military volunteers and contract hires for all personnel demands to support FY08 deployments.**

- **HTS has sufficient FY08 funding to support hiring of required personnel.**

- **Schedule above dependent on voluntary recruiting and hiring in March & April 08**

HTS Assessment Afghanistan, 8/07
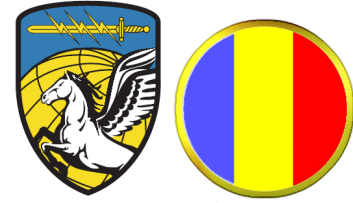
- "When we took over, of 83 formal and informal districts, 19 districts supported the government last year, and now it's 53… I absolutely attribute that change to the HTT."
  - Brigade commander, 4-82

- "Without the HTT filter on the COAs [courses of action] and the alternative maneuver tools they identified to create the exact same effect, we would have lost double the lives and would have had double the contacts. The US military has been here for years now and this unit [82nd Airborne] has been here for two rotations, and it's had no effect until now."
  - Brigade commander, 4-82

- "When I go command a unit the first thing I'll be asking for is an HTT – call me a disciple."
  - S3, 4-82

- "Would I like a HTT? Absolutely – if you could have one for every company command, they would be a phenomenal asset."
  - Company commander, 4-82

- "We estimate that, as a result of the HTT, we have reduced our kinetic operations by 60-70%."
  - Brigade commander, 4-82

HTS Assessment, Iraq 2/08

- "We could not be doing what we're doing now if we did not have the HTT."
  - Brigade Commander, 4-10

- "The HTT filled a gap. We had no one with that level of expertise to talk about personality, religion, tribal structures, the religious system... The S2 couldn't have done it – he's not an Arabist. IO didn't have that expertise. The HTT was an enabler on the staff that let us do things we couldn't have done otherwise."
  - Brigade Commander, 2-82

- "We've been here for about 2 months, and in control of battlespace for a about a month. My initial reaction is absolutely positive. I wish we had had the HTT earlier, and I wish that we had it integrated earlier. There is remarkable depth of knowledge on the team and I'm just now peeling back the capabilities. Iraq in many ways is culturally opaque and the HTT is helping us see through it."
  - Brigade Commander, 2-25

- "[The HTT] provides cultural insight—two or three levels more on what is going on in neighborhoods"
  - DCO, 2-101

- "I didn't realize how important it was until I saw it in action.... I don't think we've even scratched the surface of their potential"
  - ECOORD, 4-10

Conclusion

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The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent, and should not be attributed to the US Army, the Department of Defense, or the United States government.